

THE COVID-19 VACCINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our top priority is to save lives. Everyone will have a chance to get the vaccine. But, the number of doses is currently limited in South Carolina like in all states. Please be patient, learn what phase you're in and follow the guidance of public health officials. This will allow us to ensure those at highest risk and those who keep us alive are vaccinated first.

Below are answers to commonly asked questions about COVID-19 vaccination. You can call 1-866-365-8110 or visit scdhec.gov/vaxfacts if you have more questions.

Who can get the vaccine?

Front-line medical workers, long-term care facility residents and staff, and everyone 65 and older are among those prioritized for Phase 1a vaccine distribution. See the list of eligible people at scdhec.gov/vaxfacts for details.

As additional vaccines are approved and vaccine supplies increase, COVID-19 vaccine will be available for everyone.

How will I know when I can get the vaccine?

DHEC and its partners will notify the public by using several communication methods: news release, website and social media updates — as well as public service announcements; print, radio and TV ads, community-level outreach, direct mailers and other forms of outreach to ensure South Carolinians know when it's their time to receive vaccine. Health care providers will also notify their patients.

How can I get a vaccine?

Vaccines are given by appointment. Anyone eligible to be vaccinated should make an appointment at a location currently offering appointments.

You can use our vax locator map at scdhec.gov/vaxlocator to find the contact location for a facility near you or call 1-866-365-8110 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. seven days a week.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. No vaccine will be released until it has passed the same tough scientific and clinical testing that all vaccines in development are held to.

How can a safe vaccine be made so quickly?

Making a vaccine usually takes years. However, scientists had a head start on these vaccines. They had started work on coronavirus vaccines during past outbreaks. That earlier work helped scientists quickly make vaccines to protect against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine a live vaccine?

No. The vaccine doesn't contain live or a weakened virus in it. The vaccines contain the gene for a virus protein only. This means you can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Any vaccine or medication can cause side effects. These are typically minor, such as a sore arm or low-grade fever, and go away within a few days. Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are not approved until clinical trials show they are safe and effective. Safety is the top priority. Results from the first COVID-19 vaccines show no serious side effects.

How much will it cost me to get a vaccine?

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund. No one can be denied a vaccine if they are unable to pay a vaccine administration fee, and no one should receive a bill for receiving the vaccine.

Anyone who has received their vaccine and has a question about any charges, fees or associated costs should contact their vaccine provider.

Will more than one dose of COVID-19 vaccine be required?

Both vaccine brands currently available require two shots. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two shots 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine requires two shots 28 days apart. You must receive both shots of the same type of vaccine: either two shots of Pfizer or two shots of Moderna.

It's possible that future COVID-19 vaccines may require one shot.

How will I know when to get my second dose?

After receiving your first shot, you will receive a paper immunization record that will be completed at the time of vaccination. It will include the vaccine you received, date and location, and date when your next shot is needed. Make your second appointment while you're at your first appointment, no later. Don't leave your first appointment without knowing how and when you'll get your second shot.

Do I need to wear a mask and physically distance from others after being vaccinated?

Yes. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and staying at least 6 feet away from others, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others.